

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3809

October 8, 2015

Testimony Before the National Commission on the Future of the Army As Submitted By Representative Bill Shuster (PA-09)

Distinguished members of the commission, thank you for this opportunity to speak before you about the future of America's Army. The task you face in deciding the force posture and structure of the Army is a critical one, and I thank you for your dedication to this important duty.

I come before you today to highlight the importance of depots to supplying and maintaining the core systems relied upon by our nation's warfighters. In my own district we have Letterkenny Army Depot, where I have seen firsthand how critical weapons, vehicles, and support infrastructure are being remanufactured to continue serving the needs of those in uniform. The sophisticated work being done by the people of Letterkenny and other depots is essential to supporting our soldiers around the world, and our fighting men and women rest easier knowing that the talented people of Letterkenny are working hard to provide them with the equipment they need. America's depots are a unique and crucial part of our national defense plan, and for that reason I hope the commission will recommend their continued and full sustainment. With the potential for base realignment and closures being discussed, there should be no doubt in the minds of the commission that depots like Letterkenny serve a valuable role and should remain the bedrock of our defense industrial base. Depots are essential to ensuring the continued military dominance of the United States, and these installations must be protected and maintained to ensure the ongoing success and safety of America's fighting force.

In addition, I must stress to the commission the need to properly evaluate the Army's Aviation Restructuring Initiative and its impact on force readiness before moving forward with this drastic change to the service's attack aviation component. The National Guard is a battle-tested and field ready force with a proven record, and the full implementation of ARI would sacrifice years of invested taxpayer money. Time and time again National Guard Apache squadrons such as Pennsylvania's own 1-104th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion have proven their mettle in combat, and executed missions with the exact same degree of precision and care as the active duty component. This change would have a major impact on the pilots who fly combat missions in the National Guard and would result in the loss of decades of accumulated combat flight experience as well as a commensurate loss in readiness.

It is paramount that Congress has the proper time to evaluate such a large-scale change to our nation's armed forces, and as such I urge you to recommend the delay of any transfer of Apache helicopters out of the National Guard until Congress has had a full opportunity to vet and weigh this proposal.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share my concerns with the commission. Your work is of the utmost importance, and I hope you will continue working to preserve our depots, industrial base, and our National Guard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Shuster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bill" and last name "Shuster" clearly legible.

BILL SHUSTER
Member of Congress